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226.0 SSILA Business

* Address for Hale Prize inquiries
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During August, inquiries about nominations for the 2005 Ken Hale Prize should be sent to Nora England at (nengland@mail.utexas.edu). The chair of the committee, Pam Bunte, who would ordinarily handle correspondence about the Prize, will be out of e-mail contact for most of the month.

* Two colleagues pass away
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Two of our SSILA colleagues have passed away during the past few days: Sheldon Klein, of the University of Wisconsin, a computer scientist who
also carried out field work on Kawaiisu for the Survey of California Indian Languages, and Ross Saunders, of Simon Fraser University, who published extensively on Bella Coola. Obituary notices will appear in the October SSILA Newsletter.

226.1 Correspondence

* Tracking down Horatio Hale's notebooks

From Victor Golla (golla@ssila.org) 1 August 2005:

Horatio Hale, America's first great anthropological linguist, collected important data on both Polynesian and American Indian languages during his four-year stint as "philologist" for the Wilkes Expedition (1838-42). He published much of his material in the expedition's report (volume 6, "Ethnography and Philology", 1846), but there is certainly more that could be learned from his original notes and journals. This is particularly true of his pioneering field work in the Pacific Northwest in 1841, where we are unsure even of his itinerary.

These manuscripts have long been unlocatable. It was at one time believed that they were destroyed in a fire that swept through Hale's house in Ontario after his death in 1896. Clear evidence has emerged, however, that they survived to be sold at auction in Philadelphia in May 1911, together with much of Hale's personal library.

The sale was conducted by Freeman's auction house for the bookseller Stan. V. Henkels, and the items on auction are listed in Henkels' catalogue #1033. Among these are (item 570) "Original Manuscript Essay on the Language of the Oregon Indians, about 100 pp. 8vo, sheep," and (item 593) "Original Manuscript Note Books, containing his Essays on the Philology of the Various Countries Visited by the Commodore Wilkes Expedition. 18 vols. 4to and 12mo. An interesting lot, containing much material on the Languages of the Natives of the Sandwich Islands, China, American Indians, &c."

One of us (Krauss) tried to follow this up in 2001, only to learn that the pertinent Henkels records had recently been destroyed. He was able, however, to locate an annotated copy of the sale catalogue at the American Antiquarian Society. In this copy, item 570 is noted as "La. bya", and "[$]8.00 Kay", and item 593 as "Dalton ua" and "[$]5.00 Jones." Krauss has tried to track down "Kay" and "Jones," the apparent purchasers, but with no real success.

The manuscripts are presumably out there somewhere. We would be grateful for any suggestions or leads, and would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to join us in this scholarly detective work. Krauss has a thick correspondence file he would be willing to share with fellow sleuths.

--Victor Golla (golla@ssila.org)
Michael Krauss (ffmek@uaf.edu)
* Representing the encounter between English and Native American languages

From Lawrence A. Rosenwald (lrosenwald@wellesley.edu) June 14, 2005:

I've been working for some time on a study of how American literature, both in English and in other languages, represents language encounters. One piece of that study (published a while ago in College English) is an account of how James Fenimore Cooper represents the encounter between English and Native American languages (and between English and French) in "Last of the Mohicans." I'm now coming back to that account, thinking to make a book of what I've written and plan to write on this large subject, and on reading the Cooper essay I'm vividly aware that what I'm talking about is how the encounter between English and Native American languages is understood by speakers of English (not just Cooper, but also John Heckewelder, Peter DuPonceau, some novelist contemporaries of Cooper's).

That leads me to wonder whether any Native American works more or less contemporary with Cooper represent this same linguistic encounter from the other side. ("Last of the Mohicans" was published in 1826, but I'd be happy to go significantly earlier or later than that if there were works in Native American languages on this subject.)

I'd be most grateful for any references or suggestions!

--Larry Rosenwald
Wellesley College
(lrosenwald@wellesley.edu)

* The use of hyphens in writing American Indian languages

From William Bright (william.bright@colorado.edu) July 20, 2005:

Hyphens have been used in a variety of ways by people attempting to write Native American languages. Apart from their use to separate morphemes, hyphens were often used in the 19th century as an indirect way of conveying vowel quality, following the famous McGuffey readers. The usage can be summed up as follows: "The vowels a e i o u, when followed by a consonant, have their English 'short' values, as in pat, pet, pit, pot, putt. When followed by a hyphen or space, they have their English 'long' values, as in bait beet bite boat butte."

This principle was often used by Lewis and Clark in their journals (though not with complete consistency, to be sure). For instance, referring to a Lower Chinookan group in Washington state, they used the hyphenated spelling <Wack-ki-a-cum> to represent Cathlamet Chinookan /wáqayqam/. Here the sequence <ki-> accurately represents the vowel quality of the Chinookan /gay/. Note that Lewis and Clark's spelling is mirrored in the modern English spelling of the placename Wahkiakum County; but without the hyphen, the pronunciation of this name becomes...
harder to guess.

The Board on Geographic Names of the US Geological Survey, which establishes standard spellings of names to be used on topographic maps, has the policy that no hyphens will be used in names derived from Indian languages. However, some hyphenated names have slipped past their vigilance. For instance, Colorado has the placename O-Wi-Yu-Kuts Plateau (Moffat Co.), from a Ute personal name /uwáayi:kaci/ 'he's not coming'; here again, use of the hyphen in the spelling <wi-> correctly reflects Ute /waay/.

My reaction on first seeing such hyphenated spellings, in 19th century transcriptions of California Indian languages, was the same as Emmon's: I wanted to take out the hyphens. But since I've been working on placenames across the US, I've realized that those hyphens may carry some information; if we delete them, we lose that information. Long live the humble hyphen!

--William Bright
Boulder, Colorado
(william.bright@colorado.edu)

From Carl Masthay (cmasthay@juno.com) July 24, 2005

Nice comment from Emmon Bach in SSILA Bulletin 225. Here is what I wrote a year and a half ago (23 Jan. 2004):

I dislike hyphenated or spaced-out Amerindian words because they are visually difficult to comprehend. They should always be closed up, especially for the persons adept in the language. However, there is a much better way: avoid syllabification but hyphenate per root (morphemes), and then things become quite clear. As below, let us use it as an example by root forms instead:

(hyph-en-at-ed by root): I do a-gree with you a-bout us-ing the se-par-at-ion of syl-lable-s to help child-ren learn. It is use-ful learn-ing Eng-lish too. How-ever, it can be just as con-fus-ing when the words blend to-gether. See how this para-graph looks in Eng-li-sh when the same techn-ique is ap-pli-ed.

However, a real problem arises: it destroys suprasegmental intonation or stress boundaries. That is the reason in English we syllabify differently from the way Continental languages do. English follows complicated syllable-splitting rules at the ends of lines, and one must use a little book of syllabification to help, and the rules have changed over the years too! Such as "ischemic" is not the former syllabic "is-che-mic" /iss-KEE-mic/ but the sense-element "isch-e-mic" /isk-EE-mic/ ('stop-blood-ic': said of a body part in which the blood is no longer reaching). So with "children" above, English rules require "chil-dren" /CHIL-jren/ because "dr" is a phonemic consonant cluster in English but not "jr" a phonetic consonant cluster, and so one cannot split by the morphemes (child + plural suffix). This is further reason for closing up all words as soon as the learner assimilates the new forms.

Many non-Iroquoian Indians (Algonquians, for example) fight for their
sylabification, not realizing that they violate the genius of their language. It takes a lot of explaining to show how much easier it is to use morphemic sylabification rather than simple sylabification, but the person who must do the sylabifying must know the deep structure of his or her language well enough to split right. It also has to do with the long, hard transitional road from resistive ignorance to knowledge of the craft of grammar and syntax and just sounding right in accord with the intonation over a word and a sentence for flow.

--Carl Masthay
St. Louis, Missouri
(cmasthay@juno.com)

* Those (Welsh and not Algonquian) sheep-shearing numerals again

From Harald Prins (prins@ksu.edu) July 23, 2005:

Thanks to Carl Masthay for his follow up on the query from my colleague Robert Corum, about the enigmatic numbers list. His response intrigued me, because it answered an old query by New England lawyer and history buff named Rufus K. Sewall of Wiscasset, Maine.

In a communication made to the Maine Historical Society some time in the 1860s, Sewall has an inquiry "relative to the lost tribe of the Wawenoc Indians in Maine" and gave the following list of "their 'Numerals,' as handed down through the agency of a deeply graven tradition." These were as follows, from 1-20:

1. Een
2. Teen
3. Tother
4. Fither
5. Pimp
6. Een-pimp
7. Teen-pimp
8. Tother-pimp
9. Fither-pimp
10. Glee-get
11. Een-gleeget
12. Teen gleeget
13. Tother-gleeget
14. Fither-gleeget
15. Bum-fra
16. Een-bumfra
17. Teen-bumfra
18. Tother bum-fra
19. Fither-bumfra
20. Frith-en-y

This corresponds to what Masthay referred to as the "the so-called sheep-shearing Welsh numeral sets."

In his inquiry, Sewall asked, "Whence did they come? Did [the Welsh Prince] Madoc bring them here in his semi-true, semi-fabulous voyage? Or did the North-men leave them on this coast? Perhaps some readers of your pages can tell, after reading them as they here [are presented]."
The answer comes far too late for Rufus King Sewall (he died almost 90 years old in 1903).

--Harald Prins
(prins@ksu.edu)

From Ives Goddard (Goddard.Ives@NMNH.SI.EDU) July 25, 2005:


They’re still out there. In the late 1950’s someone sent a set to Vernam Hull, Professor of Celtic Languages at Harvard, who had learned Old Irish from James A. Geary (pronounced Gary, like Mary), who was, of course, also a serious student of Algonquian languages, especially Meskwaki. Hull sent them to Frank Siebert, who confirmed that they were unknown to the Indians of Maine.

--Ives Goddard
Smithsonian Institution
(Goddard.Ives@nmnh.si.edu)

* Learning an Indian language in an urban area

From Mathew (kituhwa79@yahoo.com) 16 July 2005:

My name is Mat Barkhausen. I live in Denver, Colorado, where I recently graduated with a BA in Interactive Media Design.

I've been interested in languages and linguistics for a long time, but never pursued it seriously. Since my mother's family is Cherokee, I have been especially interested in learning Cherokee. I also became interested in Lakota. But although I have been studying both languages for over ten years, I am nowhere near conversant in either one. I have come to understand that the prospect of "teaching yourself" a language is pretty absurd.

We had a Cherokee speaker come up from Oklahoma for a one-week "crash-course" but most of what he shared with us I was already familiar with. A linguist I know said that native speakers are typically not that good at teaching their language because they've had no linguistic training and don't understand how different it is for someone learning it as a second language. So I thought, "Perhaps I should become a linguist." Yet others whom I spoke to said, "The academic process is too slow. Just move to a community of native speakers and immerse yourself in it." But I am unable to relocate right now to Oklahoma or North Carolina. I can't even begin to tell you how depressing that is.

I recently began working with Donna Langston, in the Ethnic Studies department at the University of Colorado at Denver, who has proposed
that we create an "Indigenous Languages Institute" at UCD (unaware that an organization already existed with the same name) where one could go and take classes in an Indigenous language just as you could take in other languages. You can go to many colleges and universities in the US and find courses in Korean or German, so why is the same not true of Lakota, or Navajo, or Ojibwe?

Our attempt to create an Indigenous Languages Institute accessible to the considerably large urban Indian community of Denver has not quite worked out as we'd hoped. Locating grant funding for an Indian language revitalization program that was not based on a reservation has proved next to impossible. I suppose they assume that because we have moved to the city we should not continue to be who we are? (As if there weren't Spanish or Vietnamese speaking communities in many parts of the city!)

I would love to become fluent in an Indigenous language, and to help others to do so, but I've no idea how to go about it under these circumstances. If any of you have any advice, feel free to contact me, and if you that have information about your own efforts to save indigenous languages that you'd like to share, definitely send it my way.

--Mathew Barkhausen
7031 Clayton St., Denver, CO 80229
(kituhwa79@yahoo.com)

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226.2 Dictionary Database Template Available as Shareware
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From Monica Macaulay (mmacaula@wisc.edu) July 27, 2005:

A group of us at UW-Madison have developed a Menominee dictionary database template (with funding from NSF) which we would be happy to share with any interested parties. The database template was designed for our work on a Menominee dictionary but could be adapted for use with other languages without too much trouble. It uses Microsoft Access as the front end and an SQL database as the back end. (Because of the font required for Menominee, additional work was needed on the backend to allow our Unicode font to display correctly.)

There are new database programs in other office suite installations, and we believe you could easily use our template in those programs as well, if you wish, but some functionality may be lost. We used MS Access 2002 aka XP.

You would need a database, either locally (for a single user) or on a server (for multiple users, or to allow use of the database from multiple locations) in order to adapt it to your own use.

On the server side, any kind of SQL database can handle this type of interaction; providing there is an ODBC driver for it. We used PostgreSQL because of its simplicity, security, and in-house knowledge and support. The database is run off of a server, in our case, to provide interaction for multiple users over varying distances; however, a local installation of a database for a single user could easily
accomplish the same feat. In addition to this, if you planned on running this over an ODBC connection, you would have to work with your server administrator to allow users to connect over firewall connections to ODBC ports, to troubleshoot the connections, and to allow access to the database from specific types of connections for specific users. We recommend working closely with your server administrator to develop a secure connection policy.

We would be happy to share this with anyone who's interested but must stress that we would not be able to provide technical support. There are still some issues to be resolved and we are working to fix them, so it is important to note that this would be distributed "as is" and that you would need to customize it to fit your needs. We'd be happy to share improvements we make, and we'd be thrilled to hear about what changes you might make. Please keep in mind that this would be distributed as a template for how to use Access with a server database to create a dictionary, rather than as a program to create one. Familiarity with MS Access (or a computer consultant who has such familiarity) would help the end users familiarize themselves with the template, and make necessary adjustments.

Keeping in mind our no-technical-support caveat, I would be happy to answer any simple questions (or refer them to our computer consultant).

--Monica Macaulay
Department of Linguistics, University of Wisconsin-Madison
(mmacaula@wisc.edu)

226.3 After Aramaic and Latin: Mel Gibson's Mayan Film

From Peter Bakker (linpb@hum.au.dk) July 27, 2005:

SSILA Bulletin readers might be interested in this Reuters story (picked up from The Australian on July 27):

LOS ANGELES: Actor-director Mel Gibson is well on his way to cornering a new niche market in Hollywood -- movies written in ancient languages.

A year after breaking box-office records with The Passion of the Christ, which was shot in Aramaic, Latin and Hebrew, Gibson has struck a deal with the Walt Disney Co to release his next picture in a Mayan dialect.

Gibson is due to begin shooting the film, titled Apocalypto, in Mexico in October and is aiming for a northern summer release next year, spokesman Alan Nierob said.

As with The Passion, Gibson will direct and produce the Mayan-language film from his own script through his company, Icon Productions, and he will not appear in the movie.

The film's cast will consist of unknown performers native to Mexico, Nierob said. The story is described as a "unique adventure" set 500 years ago.
Entertainment trade paper Daily Variety reported that at least three studios passed on the film before Disney landed rights to it.

It remains to be seen whether Gibson can repeat his success with a subtitled film that lacks a built-in religious-based audience or controversy like the criticism leveled by some Jewish leaders at The Passion of the Christ.

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226.4 Positions Open
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* Postdoctoral field research in S America or New Guinea

From Alexandra Aikhenvald (A.Aikhenvald@latrobe.edu.au) 21 Jul 2005:

Applications are invited for a two-year Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology. This is to commence within six months from the date of offer.

Applicants should have been awarded their doctorate within the last five years. They should have experience of linguistic fieldwork and will, ideally, have already completed a grammatical description of some previously undescribed language (not their native language) in terms of basic linguistic theory. The University may consider cases in which the period is in excess of five years due to special circumstances. Applications will be considered from candidates whose thesis is currently under examination. Applicants must hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent qualifications at the date of appointment. La Trobe graduates should normally have a minimum of two years postdoctoral research experience at another institution. A Fellowship will not normally be awarded to an applicant who holds a permanent appointment within the University.

The successful applicant will work as part of a team with Professor R.M.W. Dixon, Professor Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, and other members of the Research Centre, on a topic relating to languages preferably from South America or New Guinea (although applicants with primary interest in another area would be considered). They will undertake extensive fieldwork and will either (i) produce a comprehensive description of some previously undescribed language; or (ii) pursue an in-depth study of a language contact situation. Exceptionally, applicants may suggest their own research topics, which must fall within the ambit of RCLT's research profile. Option (ii) will be suitable for someone who already has good knowledge of one or more of the languages involved in a suitable contact situation. The choice of project will be made after discussion between the successful applicant and Professors Dixon and Aikhenvald.

The Fellowship will be a two-year appointment and is intended to advance the research activities of the University by bringing to or retaining in Australia a promising scholar.
Enquiries should be directed initially to the Associate Director of RCLT, Professor Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (a.aikhenvald@latrobe.edu.au).

Further information and the application form may be obtained from:


The application must be received by the Secretary of the RCLT Research Committee, Mrs May Tan, no later than 23 September 2005. Applicants should supply the names and addresses of three academic referees; they should ask each referee to provide a confidential statement, to reach the RCLT Research Office directly by 23 September 2005. Applicants should also send in hard copies of their theses and/or dissertations, and of published work (including papers in press).

Salary range is currently A$50,336 to A$52,184 per annum. Closing date: 23 September 2005.

La Trobe University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provides a smoke-free work environment.

226.5 Websites of Interest

* Linguistic minorities in Panama
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From Marta De Gerdes (degerdes@uni-lueneburg.de) July 20, 2005:

Sometime ago I let those interested know through the SSILA Bulletin about the construction of a Kuna Data Base. I have managed to keep it up for five years with the help of students, colleagues and some indigenous collaborators, and have managed to expand it. The project is now called "Documentation Center of the Linguistic Minorities of Panama", and features a Spanish and German version. The address is:

http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/fb3/suk/akpam

The platform is still under construction, so all collaboration is welcome!

  --Marta de Gerdes 
  (degerdes@uni-lueneburg.de)

226.6 E-Mail Address Updates
The following additions or changes have been made to the SSILA e-mail list since the last Bulletin:

Altman, Heidi ...................... haltman@GeorgiaSouthern.edu
Barkhausen, Mat .................... kituhwa79@yahoo.com
de Gerdes, Marta Lucia............... degerdes@uni-lueneburg.de
Johnson, Rick ...................... nihil.est@gmail.com
Webster, Anthony ................... awebster@siu.edu

When your e-mail address changes, please notify us (golla@ssila.org).

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS
 Victor Golla, Secretary-Treasurer & Editor
 P. O. Box 555
 Arcata, California 95518-0555  USA
 tel: 707/826-4324    -   fax: 707/677-1676   -   e-mail: golla@ssila.org
 Website:  http://www.ssila.org
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